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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000771

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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E.LOKEN AND L.DOBINS
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZANU-PF INSIDER EDDIE ZVOGBO, JR. ON CURRENT
SITUATION

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Glenn Warren under 1.4 b/d

Summary

1. (C) ZANU-PF politician and businessman Eddison Zvogbo, Jr. believes President Robert Mugabe is on track to stand for reelection next year. While many in ZANU-PF would like to see Mugabe go sooner rather than later, internal ZANU-PF opponents are afraid to directly challenge him and are focused on succession. On elections, the SADC mediation is unlikely to result in a leveling of the playing field; it is not in ZANU-PF's interest to make concessions. There is growing dissatisfaction with ZANU-PF in the rural areas, but the party's governmental machinery and patronage should allow it to maintain its traditional rural support. ZANU-PF is concerned about the MDC, particularly in light of the failing economy, but is buoyed by the MDC split. Western sanctions are ineffective, except as against children of ZANU-PF leaders. End Summary.

2. (C) Polecon chief met with Zvogbo on August 28. Zvogbo, the namesake of the deceased ZANU-PF heavyweight and prominent Mugabe critic, is a Masvingo businessman. Although critical of Mugabe and the party, he has long-standing business and political roots within ZANU-PF and intends to run for Parliament next year. He is allied with the Mujuru faction.

Mugabe on Track

¶3. (C) Zvogbo told us that opposition to Mugabe within ZANU-PF continues below the surface, particularly on the part of the Mujuru faction. Many in ZANU-PF would like to see Mugabe leave the scene, but nobody was sufficiently courageous to force the issue. Therefore, the jockeying behind the scenes was directed at succession.

¶4. (C) According to Zvogbo, Mugabe had let it be known within the party that he intended to step down after next year's elections as a way of deflecting pressure to get him to leave office before the elections. Zvogbo was skeptical Mugabe would do so; he had made similar promises in the past.

¶5. (C) Confirming what has been reported in the media and what others had told us, Zvogbo said Mugabe still had not received official backing for his candidacy from ZANU-PF. A party conference or congress in December would be designed to provide this. Zvogbo opined that ZANU-PF would be stronger in an election with another presidential candidate--assuming a united party. But without Mugabe as head, the party might fracture. Mugabe and his internal opponents knew this; therefore, absent a complete collapse of the economy, it was unlikely Mugabe would be replaced as presidential candidate.

ZANU-PF Likely to Prevail in Elections

¶6. (C) Zvogbo discounted the current SADC mediation. Noting that an announced goal of the mediation was free and fair elections, he rhetorically asked why ZANU-PF would want the process to succeed.

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¶7. (C) Zvogbo commented that ZANU-PF's traditional rural support had been weakened by the scarcity of goods resulting from government-imposed price controls. Nevertheless, people in rural areas, particularly Mashonaland, traditionally looked to government as their benefactor. ZANU-PF candidates would attempt to use governmental structures to provide food and other necessities to the rural areas in advance of elections to solidify ZANU-PF support. Through delimitation of additional constituencies to be formed pursuant to Constitutional Amendment 18, ZANU-PF expected to increase its influence in these areas. (Note: The draft amendment would increase lower house districts from 150 to 210, almost all in rural areas. End Note)

¶8. (C) As an example of the patronage available to ZANU-PF candidates, Zvogbo said that the Grain Marketing Board was providing maize to him that he would personally deliver to his prospective constituents in Masvingo. In light of the scarcity of fuel and reduced public transportation, he was also contemplating purchase of a bus to provide transportation from Masvingo's rural areas to the town of Masvingo.

¶9. (C) Given the current economic crisis, ZANU-PF was concerned about the upcoming elections even with its power to mobilize voters in the rural areas. Therefore, the MDC's continued split was "manna from heaven." ZANU-PF did regret, however, that the Mutambara faction was not stronger. If the two factions ultimately fielded rival candidates in the elections, he thought ZANU-PF would make some gains in Matabeleland.

¶10. (C) Parenthetically, Zvogbo noted that price controls had been a disaster and that ZANU-PF had "shot itself in the foot." Anybody with a modicum of sense could have known what the result would be, added Zvogbo. And almost everyone in government knew what was necessary to turn the economy around--and knew that sanctions had no effect on the economy.

Effect of Sanctions

¶10. (C) Zvogbo stated that financial sanctions had limited effect on ZANU-PF targets. Those individuals with businesses, with the support of the government patronage system, were still doing well. Sanctions did bite hard when imposed on children; ZANU-PF bigwigs were personally affected when their offspring could not study in the West.

Comment

¶11. (C) ZANU-PF has historically won elections--albeit rigged--on the strength of its rural support. As of now, the unanswered questions are whether the economy will deteriorate to the extent that traditional ZANU-PF rural voters, despite the GOZ's electoral machinery, look to the MDC as a source of salvation, and whether the MDC can organize in these areas.
End Comment.
DHANANI